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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM Fred Thomas in the Morning

STATION WRC-TV

DATE September 6, 1984 6:00 A.M. CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Harry Rositzke

FRED THOMAS: In April 1970, my first guest retired to a farm in Middleburg, Virginia after 25 years with the Central Intelligence Agency. His field of expertise, Soviet operations. Meet Harry Rositzke, a graduate of Union College, with a Harvard University Ph.D. in Germanic linguistics. He has taught at three universities, including Harvard. During World War II he served with the Office of Strategic Service in the European Theater. He became one of the first people to report for duty with the CIA. He became Chief of Soviet Operations for the agency. He is the author of several books, all dealing with the Soviet Union and the CIA. His latest is Managing Moscow: Guns or Goods?. It is hailed as an expert analysis of the true nature of the long-term Soviet threat.

Good morning, sir. A pleasure to meet you.

HARRY ROSITZKE: Nice to see you.

THOMAS: You mean to tell me all this bugaboo about the Soviet Union is not real?

ROSITZKE: Well, it depends on the nature of the bugaboo. For 25 years we've decided it was a military threat. And yet the Soviets have never yet sent a regiment of their troops into any place in the Third World in order to forward their ends. We have followed what we call a policy of military containment. For 25 years we've spent trillions and many lives, as you know. And yet during this period the Soviets have made a fairly steady expansion of their power and influence. In India, for example, in Syria, in the Yemens, in Central Africa, and in Cuba. In other words, all our armaments have not been able to slow up what I consider their political and economic offensive.

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THOMAS: There was a period of what we call the cold war in this country. Was it real or imagined?

ROSITZKE: It was a real cold war. Both sides were at each other's throats. Both sides suspected each other. Both sides spent a lot of time on propaganda, on the one hand, and building up weaponry, on the other. The fact still remains that in spite of that, and in spite of our armaments, the Russians have made progress at achieving their ends, which is to expand their influence outside the Soviet Union.

THOMAS: But prior to them making that kind of progress, you feel that this country has given them too much deference over the years, too much of a -- being too concerned about a threat, when there was really no threat at all, no military threat.

ROSITZKE: Exactly. But the point is, I think, if you look at the record, we have run scared of the Russians for 35 years, with one exception, the early years of the '70s, when President Nixon decided they were going to be around a long time, we wanted to be around a long time, and he went there and started talking to them.

In all these years, we have never taken a serious gesture abroad, a serious foreign policy decision except in reaction to Moscow. In other words, Moscow has dictated most of our actions for the last 30 years.

THOMAS: You talked to a KGB officer at one point, and one of the things you point out in your book is that we give the Soviets too much credence for intelligence. I mean in being highly sophisticated in a lot of the things they do. But basically they're very simple and their approach is very pragmatic.

ROSITZKE: I would say they're businessmen at their business in the intelligence field. They're businessmen in terms of being political leaders trying to get more connections abroad, that they are a very cautious people, that they are very persistent, and that they will do everything they can to forward their interests and maintain what has been an enormous propaganda campaign against capitalism and against our country.

THOMAS: In the past 25 years, which President do you think has been more realistic in his approach to assessing the Soviet Union?

ROSITZKE: Well, President Kennedy started being realistic in his early years. President Johnson sought to build some bridges, but his time was taken up by Vietnam. And so I would say, actually, Nixon, to a certain extent Ford and Carter,

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tried to be sane, tried to be level-headed.

THOMAS: But you didn't think that Nixon was afraid of the Soviet Union, did you?

ROSITZKE: Nixon was not afraid to go and sup with the devil and say, "All right. What kind of arrangements can we make so we don't blow each other up?"

THOMAS: Ronald Reagan?

ROSITZKE: And Ronald Reagan has gone back to the '50s, where John Foster Dulles led a kind of moral religious crusade against the Soviet Union, refused to talk to them, you couldn't believe a word they said, and they'd collapse pretty soon anyway. I think that is fairly close to what President Reagan has in mind.

THOMAS: What did your intelligence and your agents in the Soviet Union tell you or give you the impression about the Soviets? Are they a people that we can live with in peace?

ROSITZKE: Well, of course, the whole issue is how do the leaderships get along. And it's a perfectly clear fact, I think, that the Russians are as eager to avoid an all-out war as we are, and therefore they're willing to come to terms on matters of mutual interest. That's what President Nixon did.

Beyond that, they are not going to cave in to our demands. They're not going to change their system because we don't like their system. And the odds are, in the long run, they will change slightly, but only under their own control.

So, they can be talked to. And I think it's clearer and clearer that negotiations on a variety of things is the only way ahead for our working together.

THOMAS: One final question. Are you concerned about Mr. Reagan's policy in dealing with the Soviets now?

ROSITZKE: Well, I feel strongly that if he relies totally on the military, the military containment policy he's inherited, I don't think he's going to get anywhere. I'm a little concerned, as a lot of people are, about his brandishing, sort of, nuclear weapons, of insisting, really, to a certain extent, that the Soviets are planning to destroy us militarily, which I happen to think is completely wrong.

THOMAS: We've just had a smattering of Managing Moscow: Guns or Goods?

Thank you very much, sir. Very interesting book.